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 ZEN/AMCONSUL BELFAST POUCH  
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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 1/22/12 (STREATOR, E.J.) OR-M  
 TAGS: PINT, PINS, PEPR, UK, EI, US  
 SUBJECT: SENATOR MOYNIHAN'S MEETING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND  
 - SECRETARY JAMES PRIOR

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: SENATOR DANIEL MOYNIHAN CALLED ON SECRETARY JAMES PRIOR, JANUARY 20, TO DISCUSS CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION. PRIOR EXPLAINED THE PLANS AND PROSPECTS FOR INSTITUTING A PROGRAM OF "ROLLING DEVOLUTION" IN THE PROVINCE AND ALSO TOUCHED ON THE PAISLEY VISA ISSUE. HE SAID HE IS CONTEMPLATING A TRIP TO THE U.S., POSSIBLY THIS SPRING. END SUMMARY

3. "ROLLING DEVOLUTION": PRIOR SAID THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE IS WORKING ON A NEW INITIATIVE FOR THE GRADUAL TRANSFER OF POLITICAL POWER BACK TO THE PROVINCE FROM WESTMINSTER. IN BROAD TERMS, THE PLAN CALLS FOR AN ASSEMBLY ELECTED BY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND AN APPOINTED EXECUTIVE BODY HEADED, INITIALLY, BY PRIOR. MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE WOULD BE DRAWN LARGELY FROM THE NEW ASSEMBLY; OTHERS WOULD COME FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

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AND COULD BE EXISTING MINISTERS IN THE NIO. PARTICIPATION BY NON-ELECTED MEMBERS FROM BOTH COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTH IS NOT EXCLUDED. INITIALLY, THE ASSEMBLY WOULD DISCUSS AND SCRUTINIZE LEGISLATION AND SET UP COMMITTEES WHICH COULD TAKE TESTIMONY FROM MINISTERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS ON A WIDE RANGE OF POLICY MATTERS. IT WOULD ACT ON THE BASIS OF A WEIGHTED MAJORITY SET AT A PERCENTAGE LOW ENOUGH (70 PERCENT IS THE FIGURE BEING CONSIDERED) SO THAT NO SINGLE PARTY WOULD HAVE A VETO.

4. PRIOR EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WERE MANY OBSTACLES TO BE OVERCOME, BUT THAT THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO DESIGN A SYSTEM WHICH COULD WITHSTAND THE BOYCOTTS, STRIKES AND WALKOUTS THAT HAVE UNDERMINED PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT DEVOLUTION. OVER THE COMING WEEKS, HE PLANS TO HOLD IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS ON THE INITIATIVE WITH THE MAJOR PARTIES IN THE PROVINCE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED THE "MEAT" OF HIS PROPOSALS WITH EITHER THE OFFICIAL UNIONISTS (OUP) OR THE SDLP. HE WAS UNCERTAIN AS TO HOW THE PLAN WOULD BE RECEIVED.

5. PRIOR SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO CONTACT WITH IAN PAISLEY BUT HE DID NOT NECESSARILY REGARD THIS AS A BAD THING. HE SAW SOME VALUE IN KEEPING THE OUP SEPARATED FROM THE DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCE OF PAISLEY AND THE DUP. PRIOR'S HOPE IS THAT IF THE DEVOLUTION PROCESS GETS OFF THE GROUND AND IS SEEN TO BE WORKING, THE DUP AND OTHER POTENTIAL HOLDOUTS MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO PARTICIPATE. HE SAID FULL DETAILS OF THE PLAN WOULD BE PUBLISHED ONCE THE FINAL DECISIONS WERE MADE.

6. SENATOR MOYNIHAN SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS ACTIVELY SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM AND NOT LETTING THINGS DRIFT. HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND WERE FULLY PREPARED TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO FACILITATE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

7. INVALIDATION OF PAISLEY'S VISA: PRIOR SAID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE PREFERRED IT IF PAISLEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO MAKE HIS PROPOSED VISIT TO THE U.S.

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BLOCKING PAISLEY'S TRAVEL FEEDS PROTESTANT FEARS OF A CONSPIRACY TO FORCE THEM INTO UNION WITH THE IRISH REPUBLIC. IT ALSO WOULD BE USEFUL TO GIVE THE U.S. PUBLIC FIRST-HAND EXPOSURE TO PAISLEY AND HIS UNCOMPROMISING VIEWS. SENATOR MOYNIHAN ACKNOWLEDGED THE VALUE OF EDUCATING THE PUBLIC AS TO THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION.

8. SENATOR MOYNIHAN HAS SEEN AND CLEARED THIS CABLE.  
LOUIS

END OF MESSAGE

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